DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 221 SP 026 918

AUTHOR Leigh, Cindy; Thompson, Brenda
TITLE Staff Development: An Advisory Approach.
PUB DATE Nov 85
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of The National Council of States on Inservice Education (Denver, CO, November, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; Advisory Committees; *College School Cooperation; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Participative Decision Making; *Staff Development; *Teacher Participation

ABSTRACT

The Advisory Model of Staff Development, developed in the Jackson (Mississippi) Public School System, consists of three primary components, each interacting with the others. The System-Wide Staff Development plan is prepared by a committee composed of teachers, administrators, school-board members and laypersons. This insures equity of staff development since information is presented in the same way to each staff in the district. The Personalized School Plan operates in three areas: (1) the staff writes a school improvement plan each year based on needs assessment; (2) teachers individually select objectives for their own growth and development; and (3) the principal and staff maintain the right to advance spontaneous issues or concerns. The school principal, a university representative, and team leaders work together on the advisory program. With the university person acting as mentor, the advisors support and nurture all staff members and advance the staff development program. The university advisor performs the following services: (1) conducts staff development workshop sessions in conjunction with the principal; (2) provides resources for classroom themes, projects, or personal growth topics; (3) conducts problem-solving conferences as requested by the principal or individual staff members; (4) establishes communication lines between teachers; and (5) gives in-class assistance as requested by teachers. Areas of overlap in these functions are discussed as they function to reinforce collegial sharing. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED264221

STAFF DEVELOPMENT: AN ADVISORY APPROACH

presented at

The National Council of States on Inservice Education

Annual Conference

Denver, Colorado

November, 1985

written by

Cindy Leigh, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
University of Mississippi
Advisor, Elementary Alternative School
Jackson Public Schools

and

Brenda Thompson, B.A.
Principal
Jackson Public Schools
Elementary Alternative School
Jackson, Mississippi

SP026918

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C. Leigh

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT: AN ADVISORY APPROACH

by

Cindy Leigh, Ed.D., and Brenda Thompson, M. A.

Throughout the nation schools and educational professionals are implementing sweeping reforms in a global effort to improve school effectiveness. A large part of such reform is centered on efforts within individual school systems and within individual schools to maintain positive staff development programs that will insure the continuous improvement of classroom teaching. Mississippi is a state caught up in this thrust for quality staff development. Momentum created by a statewide focus on prescribed in-service training has led educators across the state to reflect on the quality of present programs and to target needs for change. (1983 supplement of Mississippi Code)

In participating in such reflection and re-examination, those of us who work with the Jackson Public School System's Elementary Alternative School were surprised to find that an excellent staff development program had evolved over the years. This paper, therefore, offers a model to other schools interested in designing staff development programs that would be individualized, teacher-centered, and still compatible with state and district thrusts.

As implied above, this Advisory Model of Staff Development was not

conceived and then implemented, but it was sculpted through practice. It is apparent to us now, that the present model consists of three primary components, each interacting with the others. These components are: system-wide staff development, a personalized school plan for staff development, and an advisory program to facilitate staff development. Diagram 1 is offered to illustrate the overlapping nature of each of these components.

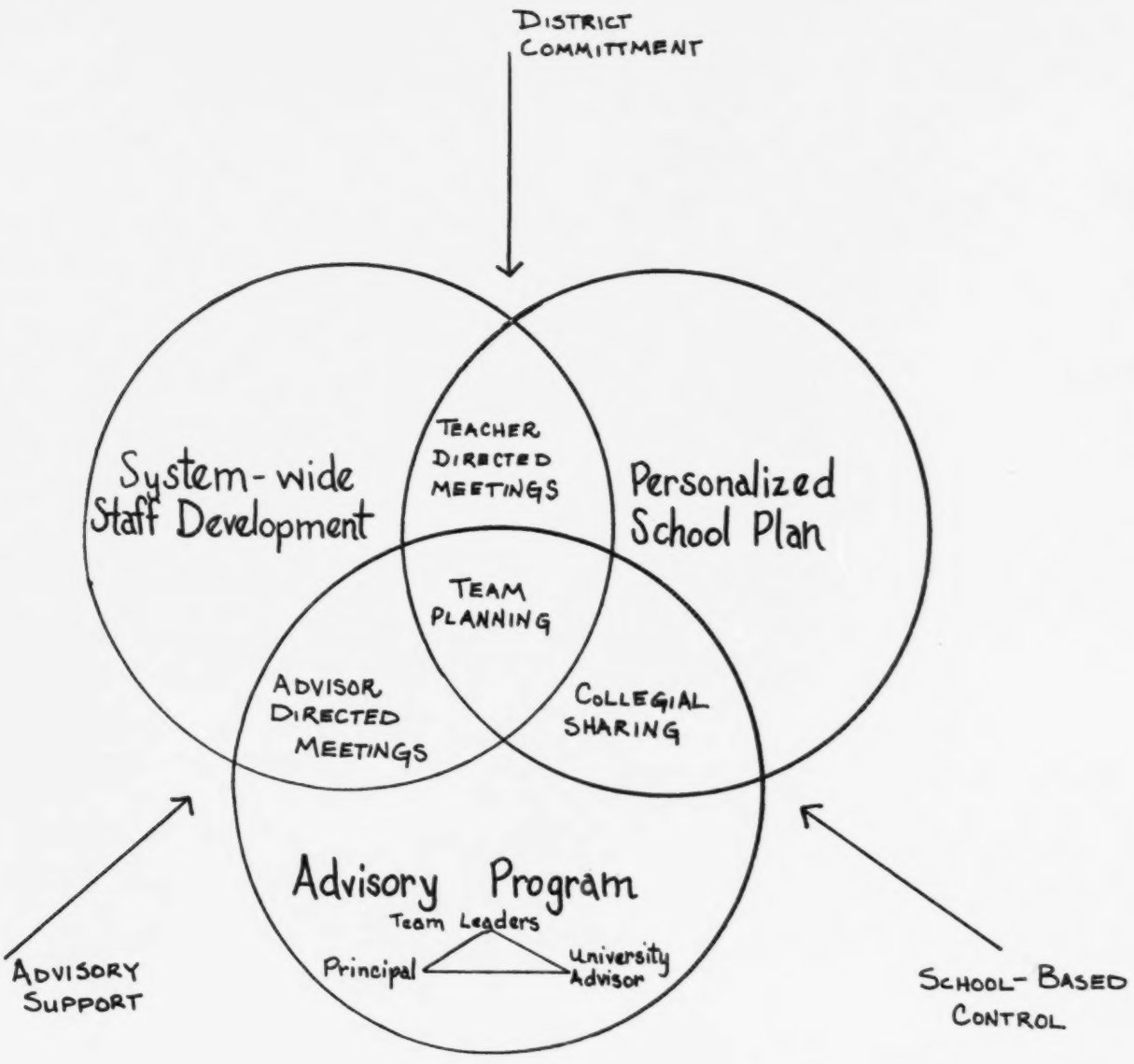
(INSERT DIAGRAM 1)

System-wide Staff Development. The district staff development plan is prepared by a committee appointed by the Jackson Public School Superintendent, Dr. Robert Fortenberry. This committee is composed of teachers, administrators, school-board members and laypersons. Staff development activities are required of all personnel and are usually designed at the district level. This insures equity of staff development because information is presented in the same way to each staff in the district. An additional element in this plan is a percentage of time alotted to all schools in the district for self-selected use.

Personalized School Plan. Our staff, like professionals everywhere, considered their needs to be unique and set about to personalize as much of the in-service program as they possibly could. As they began to take control of the direction of staff development, there was an outcry for

Diagram 1

The Advisory Model



more time for planning, dialogue, and sharing. School district leaders agreed to allow students to be dismissed a half-day each week so that the concerns could be addressed: (1) time for teacher planning, and (2) time for personalized staff development.

There are now three areas of the Personalized School Plan that are of particular interest.

a) The staff writes a School Improvement Plan each year based on a needs assessment. Certified staff members complete a needs assessment instrument provided by the school district in the spring of each year. The staff reviews tabulated data generated through this questionnaire and determines the areas of weakness or concern. They then decide together what the school-wide staff development plan will be for the coming year. Careful consideration is given to the feasibility of the plan. Activities for implementation and methods of evaluation are also written into the plan. The School Improvement Plan becomes a thread woven into the pattern of staff development throughout the year.

b) Teachers individually select objectives for their own growth and development. Each teacher defines objectives toward which effort will be devoted. One of these must be on-going throughout the school year; others may be short-term goals. The base for goal-definition is often principal evaluation, but personal choice may weigh heavily.

c) The principal and staff assert the right to advance spontaneous issues or concerns. If at any time there seems to be widespread interest in or concern for any school or educational issue, staff development time is given to dialogue among the staff and/ or to presentations by professionals with related expertise. Personalization within our staff development program is directly designed to insure that one of the primary school goals is kept in focus at all times. We are committed to providing a setting where the teacher can be a learner and a facilitator and to insuring that each teacher is viewed as a professional who grows and develops through autonomy and integrity. Autonomy and integrity are possible only when teachers have control over their lives and choice in determining direction.

Advisory Program. The principal, a university representative, and team leaders work together as advisors within the school. With the university person acting as a mentor, the advisors support and nurture all staff members and advance the staff development program.

The university advisor performs the following services:

a) Conducts staff development workshop sessions in conjunction with the principal. Such sessions are later reviewed by the staff to evaluate the degree of implementation of ideas within individual classrooms, and to report on implementation problems encountered.

b) Provides resources for classroom themes, projects, or personal growth topics. Teachers request information and activity ideas

related to planning or special interests. The greater resources offered by the university library allow teachers and children access to information they would not otherwise have, and teachers can devote time to preparation of teaching strategies rather than to gathering of materials. Requests are generally made a week or more in advance of dates needed, allowing research time.

c) Conducts problem-solving conferences as requested by the principal or individual staff members. Teachers often need someone outside the immediate school family with whom they can discuss concerns, share triumphs, and talk informally. The principal also sometimes needs support in making a point or correcting a situation. The university professional who establishes a dialogical base with staff members is often in a position to meet such needs.

d) Establishes communication lines between teachers. Many times on a school staff there are individual teacher needs that can be complimented by strengths of other staff members. Spontaneous support among staff, however, often does not occur without intervention. Because the advisor and the principal are both in positions to see such strengths and needs, support systems within school staffs can often be orchestrated at the administrative level. Another facet of this role involves encouraging teachers to share ideas and materials with others who could utilize them. This insures that every teacher does not have to "reinvent the wheel".

e) Gives in-the-classroom assistance as requested by teachers. Problems of organization, concerns about individual children, and other classroom-related issues often require that the university advisor spend time observing, moving furniture, and otherwise assisting individual teachers with special needs. The only type of assistance we have found to be avoided in this regard, is model teaching by the advisor. Though such a technique may be effective on a less individual basis, our experience indicates that with individual teachers such modeling can be intimidating, even when requested.

The school principal also serves as an advisor to each staff member, working closely with the university advisor as outlined above. The emphasis is on the role of the principal as an instructional leader rather than as a clinical supervisor. More than any other person in the model the principal must maintain a clear vision of the school as a whole and make decisions based on how each action will support this vision and the primary mission of the school. The principal is also the person who, in a very practical sense, must see that time, money, and other resources are allocated to allow for the staff development components as they have been outlined.

The team leaders serve as on-site organizers of program and as advisors to less-experienced teachers. Team leaders work to support the principal in seeing that all children have equal access to meaningful and purposeful educational experiences. They help foster unity among staff and generate enthusiasm for the program. They communicate with the principal as often as necessary concerning special needs of the team, program needs, and special

student evaluation or feedback.

Areas of Overlap. The three primary components of the model have clear areas of overlap that require brief explanation. Collegial sharing, that area between the Personalized School Plan and the Advisory Program, is a school-based facet of staff development. Such sharing may involve a teacher with a particular strength acting as a resource consultant for the entire staff. It may also involve the sharing of professional materials for consideration and discussion by the school staff during allocated staff development time.

Team planning is directed by the Team Leaders, as implied earlier. Such planning involves primary teachers (K-2nd grade), middle level teachers (3rd-4th grades), and upper level teachers (5th-6th grades), meeting as teams to determine methods of achieving basic skills. Assistant teachers, assigned to classrooms at the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade levels, also work with these teams. At team planning meetings ideas are shared, solutions to problems are brainstormed, and scheduling is organized.

Advisor-directed meetings, the third area of overlap, were discussed earlier in relation to roles of the university advisor. Such meetings may be initiated by the principal or staff, or sometimes by the university advisor as planning, discussion, or evaluation sessions. The various advisors may act as presenters at these meetings or may become facilitators. The entire staff, team-level teachers, or individuals with similar problems or concerns may be involved in such meetings.

Success of the Advisory Model. Dr. Lilian Katz (1977) in her book Talks With Teachers, discussed the role of the university advisor in meeting the needs of teachers. Dr. Katz emphasized that for such a program to work

there must be a base of trust upon which to build and that the university advisor must be compatible with the person/s with whom s/he is working. One thing we have learned is that Dr. Katz was right. We strongly believe that a primary reason the Advisory approach has been successful in our situation is that we have been able to work together without self-interests or ideas of "turf protection" getting in the way. The feeling of mutual committment to the staff and to the school has been a strong bond between the university advisor and the principal, and this feeling seems to have translated itself to the staff.

Another major reason why we feel the program works is that teachers have a sense of control. Since their attitude of ownership is very strong, they are aware that they have the power to plan or change the direction of their own staff development. As Peters and Waterman (1982) reported in their book, In Search of Excellence, a strong sense of ownership is important to achieving success in business. The same is certainly true in education, and we attribute much of the success we have encountered to this principle.

As principal and university advisor of the school in which this model evolved, we have learned to look to the teachers in designing methods and means of assisting them. At times this means slowing down in our efforts to encourage and support them, and instead to listen when they say, "I can't handle any more right now." We have also learned to listen to each other and to respond with sensitivity to the forces that affect each of us and what we can or must do in any situation. Perhaps the greatest value that we have derived from participating in this program is the sense of comradarie that has developed between the university and public school personalities. Each of us has learned much about what the other is about, and each of us has

developed new understanding for the total business of education. Finally, we feel good about what has been achieved within the school. The staff has taught us to trust them, and to pay attention to the people who can tell us most about how they grow and develop...the professionals who are there, every day, in the classrooms with the children.